

U.S. DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA
RECEIVED LAFAYETTE

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

FEB 10 2020

WESTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA

TONY R. MOORE, CLERK
WESTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA
LAFAYETTE, LOUISIANA

LAFAYETTE DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	*	CRIMINAL NO. 6:19-CR-00183-01
	*	
VERSUS	*	JUDGE SUMMERHAYS
	*	
HOLDEN JAMES MATTHEWS	*	MAGISTRATE JUDGE WHITEHURST

RULE 11 FACTUAL BASIS FOR PLEA OF GUILTY

The United States of America, through its undersigned attorneys, and the Defendant, HOLDEN MATTHEWS, through his attorney, agree and stipulate to the following facts, for the purpose of establishing a factual basis for the plea of guilty.

Over the course of a ten day period in late March and early April 2019, within the Western District of Louisiana, HOLDEN MATTHEWS intentionally set fire to and destroyed three Baptist churches with predominantly African-American Baptist congregations in St. Landry Parish. MATTHEWS targeted each of these churches because of its religious character in an effort to raise his profile as a "Black Metal" musician. Particularly, MATTHEWS sought to emulate a Norwegian musician who gained notoriety within the Black Metal community in the 1990's by burning down a series of churches in Norway.

Specifically, on March 26, 2019, the defendant, HOLDEN MATTHEWS set fire to St. Mary Baptist Church in Port Barre, Louisiana. The fire completely destroyed

HOLDEN MATTHEWS – Factual Stipulation

the building. The defendant used gasoline, a gas can, and shop rags to intentionally set this fire, and he acted because of the religious character of the church building.

On April 2, 2019, the defendant, HOLDEN MATTHEWS set fire to the Greater Union Baptist Church, located in Opelousas, Louisiana. The fire completely destroyed the building. The defendant used gasoline, a gas can, and shop rags to intentionally set this fire, and he acted because of the religious character of the church building.

On April 4, 2019, the defendant HOLDEN MATTHEWS, set fire to the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, located in Opelousas, Louisiana. The fire completely destroyed the building. The defendant used gasoline, a gas can, and shop rags to intentionally set this fire, and he acted because of the religious character of the church building.

Each of these church fires was in and affecting interstate commerce. MATTHEWS set the fires using materials that traveled in interstate commerce, which he purchased explicitly for that purpose. Specifically, in advance of all three fires, MATTHEWS used his J.P. Morgan Chase debit card to purchase a gas can and shop rags at a Walmart in Opelousas, Louisiana. MATTHEWS also used his J.P. Morgan Chase debit card to purchase gasoline in Opelousas, Louisiana, before the first and third fires. Both the gas can and the shop rags were manufactured outside the state of Louisiana. The gasoline traveled through an intracontinental pipeline from outside of the state of Louisiana before it was sold to MATTHEWS. MATTHEWS bought the gas can, shop rags, and gasoline for the purpose of setting church fires, and MATTHEWS did, in fact, use these items to start each of the three

church fires described above. When MATTHEWS used his J.P. Morgan Chase debit card to purchase these items, the transactions used interstate wires and caused electronic transmissions to travel in interstate commerce.

In addition, prior to setting the third fire at Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, MATTHEWS used the Internet, a facility of interstate commerce, to disclose to fellow Black Metal enthusiasts that he had burned the other two churches, including by posting photographs and videos on Facebook that MATTHEWS had taken in real time using his iPhone as those churches burned. MATTHEWS posted these photographs and videos on Facebook in an effort to promote himself as a Black Metal musician. MATTHEWS received a positive reaction through Facebook to those materials, which further emboldened him to set fire to Mount Pleasant Baptist Church.

The defendant, HOLDEN MATTHEWS, agrees that, if this matter were to go to trial, the government would prove the above-listed facts beyond a reasonable doubt, and that those facts are true. The defendant agrees that the facts contained within this Factual Basis are not all of the facts known to the parties, but that these facts are a sufficient basis to support his guilty plea. The defendant further agrees that the conduct described in this Factual Basis is prohibited by 18 U.S.C. § 247(a)(1) and (d)(3), and that those statutory provisions are constitutional. Finally, the defendant agrees that he used fire to commit the federal felonies detailed in the above-listed facts.

1-21-20
Date

Holden Matthews
HOLDEN MATTHEWS
Defendant

1-21-20
Date

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